

The Lady Anglers of Santa Catalina.

BY PROFESSOR C. F. HOLDER, OF PASADENA, CAL.

California is remarkable for the great size of its game fish, but these are not monopolized by the male anglers. In this paper the well-known Californian writer tells us how the ladies catch huge specimens with rod and line, some of them weighing over 100lb. The photographs show some of the ladies with their imposing catches.

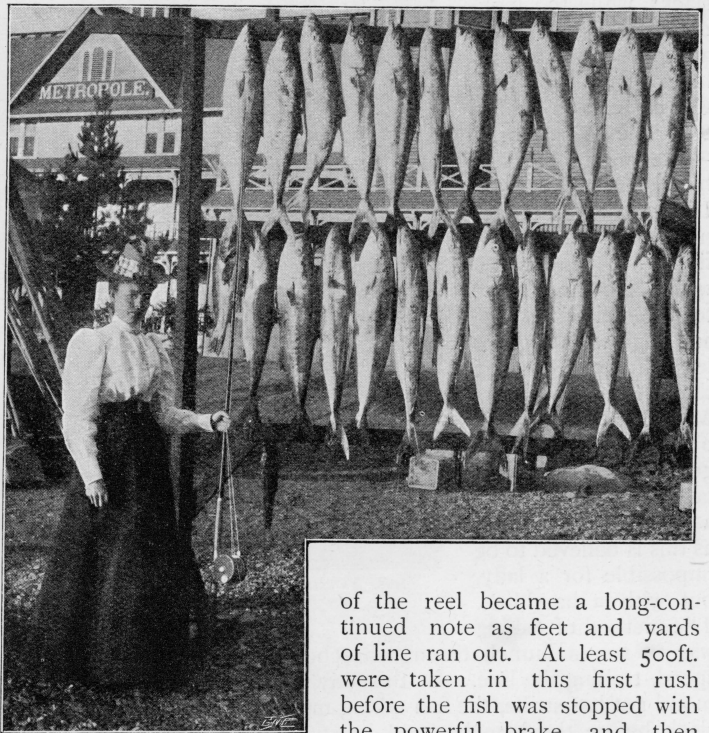


OME of the largest salmon in north-eastern Canada have been taken by the wives of the enthusiastic members of the angling guild, and in the United States it is no uncommon sight in summer to see women whipping a trout stream with all the skill and devotion of men.

Angling as a woman's sport is growing in favour, and nearly all the large equipment houses of the day make rods designed especially for the fair sex. But it is in California that the women have made records, capturing fish weighing up to 160lb. On May 1st, 1899, the tournament of the Santa Catalina Island Tuna Club opened, the day being remarkable for some notable catches by ladies. Early in the morning a large school of white sea-bass rushed into the little bay of Avalon, which was soon filled with the boats of anglers, their oarsmen vying with each other in their efforts to secure good locations for their patrons. Among the ladies was Mrs. F. V. Rider, wife of the secretary of the Tuna Club, and some description of the boat and tackle used by her may be of interest. The boat was a wide-beamed yawl, with oars, sails, and a two-horse-power gasoline engine. Across the stern was a wide plank into which were fitted two comfortable arm-chairs, side by side, so that two anglers could fish at one time: Mrs. Rider occupied the left, her husband the right, while the boatman and gaffer sat forward. The rod was a twelve-ounce split bamboo, very light but very strong, and not over seven and a half feet in length. The reel was a large silver and rubber affair, made especially for the Catalina fish, and held 1,000ft. of what is known as a 21-thread cuttyhunk line. The bait was a live sardine, caught in an ingenious manner. The white sea-bass had

driven sardines into the bay in such numbers that they formed a black mass about 5ft. below the surface, and it was only necessary to toss the line and empty hook among them, allow it to settle and then jerk it, when a sardine would be impaled. The latter would at once rush away, while the angler unreeled the line, constituting a very tempting lure.

The angler in question had adopted this procedure, when suddenly her reel began to sing, and a terrific rush came on the line as a big bass struck and carried it out. There seemed to be no stopping such a fish, and the first cry



MRS. F. V. RIDER'S CATCH OF
YELLOWTAIL.

From a Photo. by Swenson.

of the reel became a long-continued note as feet and yards of line ran out. At least 500ft. were taken in this first rush before the fish was stopped with the powerful brake, and then began as exciting a contest between a woman and a powerful fish as was ever seen. So

skilfully was the rod handled to meet the rushes of the fish that anglers in other boats stopped fishing and became spectators. The bass made repeated rushes, which took all the line gained, and towed the boat along at a rapid rate; now

out to sea, and, when turned, coming in again, and crossing the little bay. For twenty minutes this contest was continued. Then it was evident that the fighting tactics of the angler were winning; the rushes grew less severe, and presently the bass rose to the surface and began to circle about the boat. Catching sight of the boat the fish plunged down again, taking yards of line, but the merciless reel gradually brought it in.

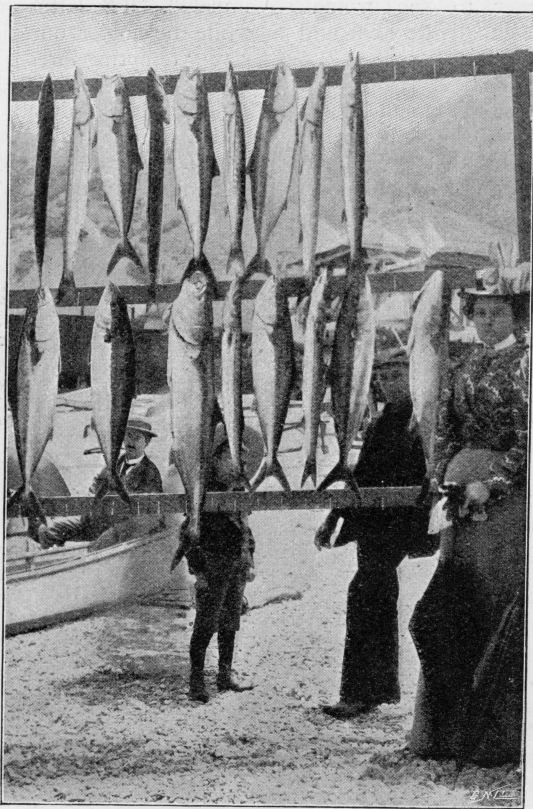
A noble fish it was; nearly 4ft. long, and still bearing off, so that the rod bent and all the angler's force was required to keep the advantage. Suddenly the gaffer slides his weapon beneath the fish; there is a tremendous struggle, and amid flying spray and foam he lifts it in as the angler unreels and slacks, while the lookers-on wave their hats and cheer. A moment later the oarsman weighs the fish: "Fifty-one pounds, ma'am!" —the record for seabass among women. In two or three days nearly one hundred of these fish were taken with rods, nine falling to the writer's share, and each weighing not less than 50lb. During the previous season Mrs. Walter Raymond, of Boston, distinguished herself by taking a tuna, not with a rod, as do the men, as this is believed to be impossible for a lady, but with a hand-line. The method of fishing was to run a launch through a school at full speed, trolling the line. In this way Mrs. Raymond got her strike, the fish taking many feet of slack before the launch could be stopped, and making a terrific fight. But the plucky fisherwoman held on through the fierce rushes, and for nearly half an hour she played the fish before it began to give out; but she never gave up, and gradually brought in the tuna, which was found to weigh 130lb. This was the first leaping tuna caught by a lady.

The fish is a cousin of the bonito and macke-

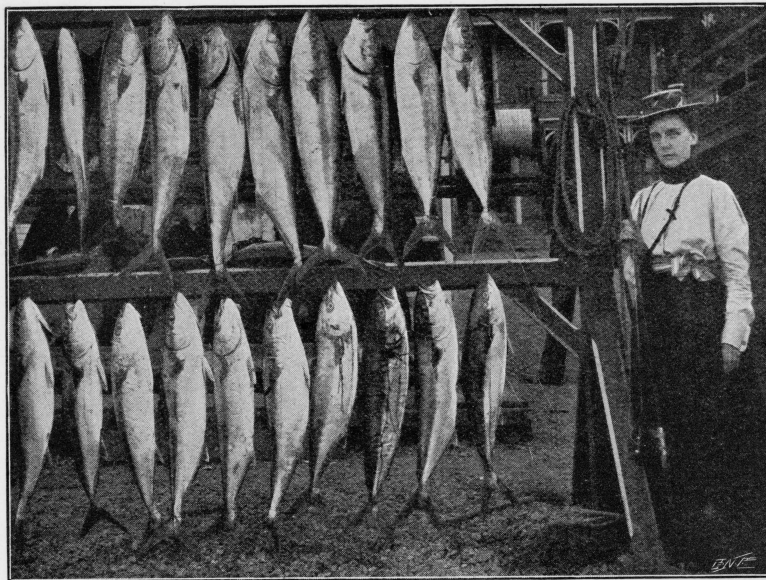
rel, and is the most active fish that swims. It is capable of making a remarkable fight, and so far only thirty members of the Tuna Club have taken specimens weighing over 100lb. with rod and reel, yet these men use a 24-thread line. Some of the record catches are: C. P. Morehouse, 231lb. tuna; the fish was played three hours and a half; C. F. Holder, 183lb. tuna, time four hours; H. St. A. Earlscliff, 180lb. tuna. This fish was killed in five hours, and towed the boat twenty miles before it came to gaff. Such is the fighting power of this great game fish, which is caught nowhere but at the island.

Ranking with the tuna in size and strength, and far exceeding it in weight, is the black sea-bass, which makes its home in the dense kelp beds which surround the islands of Southern California. It ranges up to 400lb. The largest ever taken with a rod weighed 380lb., and was caught by Mr. T. S. Manning, of Philadelphia, in 1899. This bass, which looks as a black bass might if it were 5ft. long, is taken in smooth water 30ft. or 40ft. deep, within 50ft. of the shore. One of these monsters was hooked and caught by Mrs. Henry de Long, of San José, California. She had been told that it was impossible for a woman to take one, but she announced one day

her determination to do so — not with a rod, but with a hand-line. With her husband and a boatman she went to the location called the Fence, which is at the back of Avalon and famous for its large fish. The bait used was half of a barracuda, lowered to within 3ft. of the bottom and supported by a cork float. It had not been in the kelp long before the float began to bob up and down and then disappeared. The angler allowed 10ft. of line to slip away, and then struck what was probably the largest fish ever successfully played



MRS. MANNING, ANOTHER LADY CHAMPION OF THE ISLAND.
From a Photo. by Swenson.



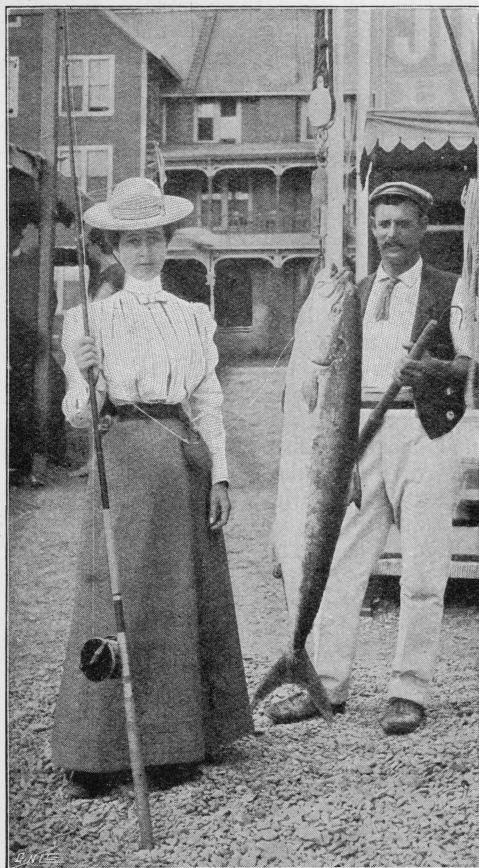
MRS. JOHN ODELL, OF CHICAGO, A SKILFUL GAFFER, TOOK A PROMINENT PART IN THE TOURNAMENT.
From a Photo. by Swenson.

by a woman. As she hooked the fish the boatman cast off the anchor, and the boat moved away behind the fish, which turned directly seaward, making for a bed of kelp about half a mile off shore. By taking a turn around the bow she was able to hold the line during a number of rushes which certainly tested her powers of endurance.

The fish towed the boat nearly a mile before it was stopped, and then it became a struggle to the end. But the lady won, bringing the bass to the surface, where, as it circled the boat, the gaffer slipped his hook beneath it and held it as the fish beat the water into foam and deluged the occupants of the boat with spray. The catch was too large to be taken into the boat, so it was fastened behind and towed into Avalon Bay, where the angler received an ovation.

The game yellowtail, which ranges from 15lb. to 40lb., as a rule affords fine and exciting sport for lady anglers, many of whom have made records. The yellowtail season usually begins in April, but May, June, July, August, and November are the best months. The yellowtail is essentially a fighter; the reel screams loudly as he strikes, and few women have landed one with a rod under twenty minutes, the fish fighting until it is safely in the boat. The writer has seen one spring from a barrel after it had been landed ten minutes. A number of ladies distinguished themselves in taking yellowtails during the before-mentioned tournament. For example, Mrs. John Odell, of Chicago,

brought to gaff a twenty-pounder in eleven minutes. Mrs. Alexander Dick, of Wilkesbarre, captured a 55½lb. white sea-bass; Mrs. R. C. Porter, of Pittsburg, Pa., a 17½lb. yellowtail; and Mrs. F. V. Rider, of Pasadena, landed an 18lb. yellowtail. All these were taken with rod or reel, and without assistance. Mrs. T. S. Manning, of Sierra Madre, took a 16lb. fish; Mrs. R. J. Dyas, St. Louis, one of 17lb.; Mrs. R. A. Eddy, of San Francisco, two fish—16lb. and 20lb. On the last day of the tournament Mrs. Manning and Mrs. Rider

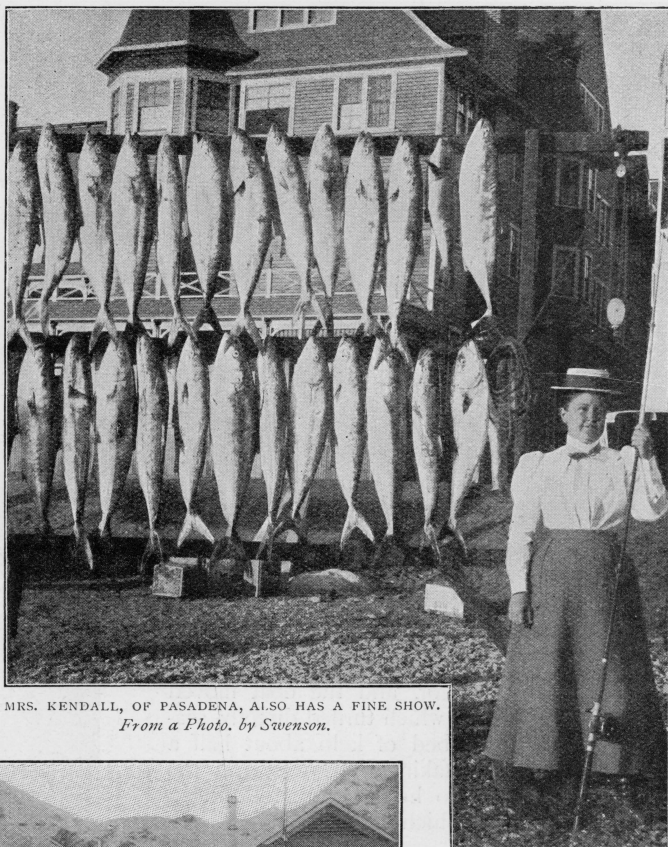


MRS. H. M. HOYT, OF SEATTLE, HOLDS THE TUNA CLUB RECORD FOR THE LARGEST YELLOWTAIL.
From a Photo. by Swenson.

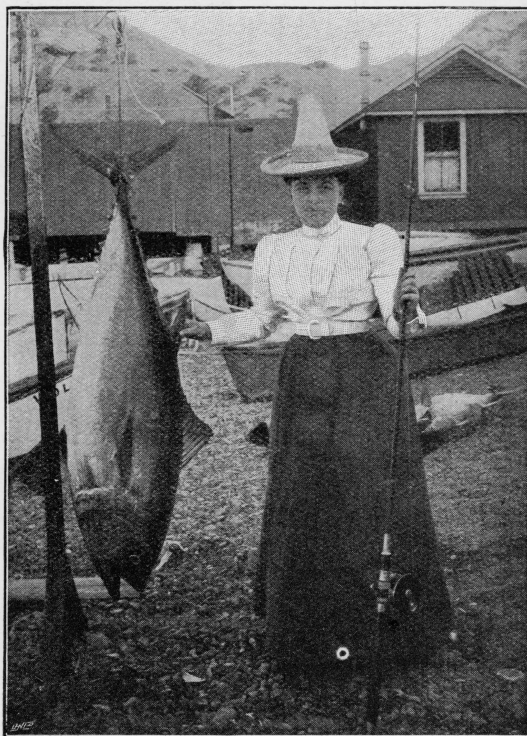
caught with light rods twenty-two yellowtails, averaging 17lb. Each fish was reeled to the boatman's gaff without aid. The Tuna Club had offered a prize for the largest yellowtail caught by a lady, and this fell to Mrs. H. M. Hoyt, of Seattle, the fish weighing 31½lb.

The latest triumph, however, fell to the rod of skilful Miss Olive Belle Clark, who is shown in the photograph with the superb tuna of 118lb., which she killed on June 9th last in ten minutes under the hour. Just think of ladies being able to vanquish such monsters!

Up to last year it has never been deemed possible for a woman to take a leaping tuna; but it is the impossible that often happens, and during the tournament of the Tuna Club of 1900 three ladies took these fish according to the rules of the club. Mrs. J. C. Connor, of Colorado Springs, caught one weighing 116lb.; Mrs. James Gardner one of 130lb.; and Miss Olive Belle Clark, of Los Angeles, one of 118lb., the last being played for fifty minutes. A photograph of Miss Clark is shown here-with, with the sturdy tuna. Doubtless the catches will long remain unique in the annals of fishing. All these ladies played their fish with great skill, for all were practised anglers. The scene as they were taking the fish in was extremely exciting, and they were surrounded by small boats and



MRS. KENDALL, OF PASADENA, ALSO HAS A FINE SHOW.
From a Photo. by Swenson.



MISS OLIVE BELLE CLARK WITH HER SUPERB TUNA OF 118LB.
From a Photo. by Swenson.

launches, which kept well off, to give them opportunity to play the fish. When the fish were finally brought to gaff the cheers were loud and hearty, and the fair anglers were given a rousing welcome by the Tuna Club members and the anglers of Avalon, who crowded the beach to see the monsters brought in and weighed by the judges of the tournament.